DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 447 953 PS 029 062

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TITLE Activity Plans of Group Games for Social and Emotional Development of Kindergarten Children in Korea.
PUB DATE 2000-04-19
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Childhood Education International (Baltimore, MD, April 17-20, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Emotional Development; Foreign Countries; *Games; *Group Activities; Interpersonal Competence; *Kindergarten; *Kindergarten Children; Primary Education; Social Development; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS South Korea

ABSTRACT

Although classroom group games have been used to effectively teach mathematics in Korean kindergarten, ethnographic research has revealed some unexpected negative effects of such games on young children due to children's over-competitiveness and the teacher's unskilled group management. This paper proposes some activity plans for group games to promote the social and emotional development of kindergarten children, based on a pilot study conducted during two academic years in Korean kindergartens. The activity plans are presented in three parts: (1) basic requirements for group games (establish amiable climate, prepare the physical environment, integrate games with other activities, consider group size); (2) guidelines for implementing group games (appropriateness of games, voluntary nature of games, encouragement of prosocial behavior, flexible rules for games, flexible game procedures, recognition of children's opinions and needs); and (3) appropriate procedures for group games (preparing sufficiently, presenting instructions and rules, deciding on instructions, deciding on the rules, grouping, judging results, evaluating, and cleaning up). (KB)

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ED 447 953

ACTIVITY PLANS OF GROUP GAMES FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN KOREA

Kee Young Choi

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes some activity plans of group games for social and emotional development of children. In Korea, teachers apply group games to a large group activity for effectively teaching mathematics. The previous ethnographic research about the socialization process of group games in kindergarten classroom in Korea showed some unexpected negative problems. Therefore it were necessary that the practical activity plans of group games should be developed for getting the positive effects. To develop the activity plans of group games, the experimental study was conducted. During the 8 months of two academic years, a pilot plan was applied to the kindergarten children (5 1/2 years of age). Through the participant observations of group games in the classroom, the pilot plan was modified based on the practical problems. The activity plans consist of three parts. They are basic requirements for group games, guidelines for implementing the group games, and appropriate procedures of group games.

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Paper presented at the Association for Childhood Education International 2000 Annual Conference
Baltimore, Maryland
April 19, 2000

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A. BACKGROUND OF GROUP GAMES IN KINDERGARTEN

Group games are generally regarded as effective activities for a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. In Korea, teachers apply group games for effectively teaching mathematics to a large group activity (Lee & Ban, 1992). And children, especially boys had a lot of fun at group games. But the positive effects of group games can be obtained through appropriate practices (Kamii & DeVries, 1980).

The author's previous ethnographic research about the socialization process of group games in kindergarten classroom in Korea showed some unexpected problems. In the research two major problems were found through five months participant observation (Choi, 1996).

The first problem is that children are too competitive with each other because they want to be the winner. When the game is over, they hated the opposite team and teased the loser. These behaviors may do harm to the social and emotional development of children. They affected

negatively the children's friendship, self-concept, cooperative attitudes, and other pro-social behaviors. The propensity of relay types in races caused the excessive competitions between teams. Many experimental studies showed that such problems could be decreased when applying cooperative games (McGill, 1984; Orlick, 1981).

The second problem is the teacher's unskilled management of group games. The teacher expected creative ideas and appropriate behaviors from the children who did not have related knowledge and experience of the game. The teacher wanted the children's autonomy in the structured and pre-scheduled game.

But most teachers did not seriously recognize these problems and their negative effects on the social and emotional development of children. So it was necessary that the practical activity plans of group games should be developed for getting the positive effects. In this presentation, the plans of practical activity will be suggested for appropriate practices of group games in kindergarten.

B. DEVELOPING PROCESS OF ACTIVITY PLANS

To develop the activity plans of group games, which could cultivate social and emotional development of children, the experimental study was conducted. During the 8 months of two academic years, a pilot plan was applied to the kindergarten children (5 1/2 years of age). Through the participant observations of group games in the classroom, the pilot plan was modified based on the practical problems.

The activity plans consist of three parts. They are basic requirements for group games, guidelines for implementing the group games, and appropriate procedures of group games.

C. ACTIVITY PLANS OF A GROUP GAME

1. Basic requirements for a group game

The appropriate classroom conditions for group games are maintaining ecological and educational classroom environments. These ecological and educational environments are established with supportive climates, the arrangement of physical play settings, the implementation of activities by the integrated ways, and the proper formation of a group game size.

1)Establishment of amiable climates

First of all it is necessary to create accepting and supportive environments because children's positive behavior can be derived from amiable classroom.

2) Preparation for physical environment

A group game needs a space to be large enough for children to play around. If a playroom is not available, a classroom can be used for a group game after a proper arrangement. A group game can also be done outdoors, but in this case, the circumstance should be made sure of children's safety.

3) Integrated management of a group game

A group game should be integrated with the other activities of the

days. If the group game can be related with other activities it might be more interesting to children. For example, a group game activity can be conducted with making game tools and singing a rooter song.

4) Group game size

For being an effective group game, the number of participating children should be considered. The number of participants normally should not exceed twenty although it may vary according to the age of children and types of a game.

2. Guidelines for a group game activity

These guidelines for a group game have been focused on the teacher's recognition of the group game's characters and effects. The teacher has to observe the game behaviors of children carefully, know the hidden functions of a group game, and recognize the real effects of a group game for the children.

* A group game should be appropriate to the social, cultural, and educational atmosphere.

* A group game should enable children to enjoy themselves and join in voluntarily.

* Many factors should be considered in order to get the educational values of a group game. Types, instructions, rules and management skills of a group game should be decided after assessing the children's developmental stages.

* A group game activity should encourage children's pro-social behavior. Excessive competition, uncooperative and unfair attitudes

should be appropriately handled. Winning the game is regarded very important to children, and so they are easily over competitive and unfair to each other. Thus, the teacher should carefully select the group game. The teacher tries to include cooperative elements to the game, which could promote the children's cooperative attitude. A game should allow children to harmonize their thoughts, cooperate with others and control themselves, so the game can improve their pro-social behaviors.

* Let children know that game instructions or rules can be changed and modified depending on the reasonable bases.

* The process of a group game can be also modified according to the children's prior group game experiences.

* The opinions and the needs expressed by children in the game should be recognized. They can be cues for expanding and renewing the game.

3. Appropriate procedures of group game

To effectively practice a group game, the following processes are required. Figure 1 shows a flow chart for appropriate procedures of group game. The teacher should flexible apply these procedures to the children's developmental stages and group game situations. The teacher has to think over the characteristics of each procedure, which emphasizes children's autonomous and cooperative attitudes.

1) Preparing activity plans and introducing a group game

To effectively practice a game, a sufficient preparation is necessary.

Selecting a proper game and developing activity plans are very important in this stage. The teacher tells children when and what they are going to do the group game when the teacher introduce the daily activities. The teacher briefly explains to the children how the group game connects with the daily learning center activities. The teacher prepares the needed equipment and tools for a game with children.

2) Presentation of the instructions and rules of a group game.

Before beginning a group game, the teacher explains instructions and rules of a group game in detail to children. The way of introducing a game can be changed as the game activity goes on. In the beginning stage, a teacher needs to inform the game instructions and rules to children in more detail than after.

3) Deciding the instructions of a game

As children get more experienced with a group game, many elements of the game can be decided through discussion. After presenting equipment and tools to children, the game instructions can be decided by children. If children suggest many different ideas because of their high interest in a game, these can be decided through a discussion. The teacher leads the discussion considering the number of children who suggest ideas and the activity time. If the suggested ideas are not appropriate for the group game and may harm their safety, a teacher may adjust them.

4) Deciding the rules of a game

Letting children decide the rules can improve their autonomy. However, decide the rules before playing game is meaningless. Rules, which were not based on their experiences, tended to be impractical. For

example, 'Don't tease opposite team' and 'Stand behind the start line' were as the general and repeated rules which children suggested without any experience. Thus, let children have game experiences before deciding the rules and give them an opportunity to think about the necessary rules. For correcting the repetitious rules or inappropriate rules, ask children to reconsider them. The teacher should post the decided rules by writing or drawing in order to help children easily understand the rules.

5) Grouping and arrangement of game tool

Grouping is depended on the types of games. Rather than dividing children into two teams, the teacher should make various group structures. Children generally prefer to divide team by sex, but it tends to cause the hatred and conflict between girls and boys. Thus, the teacher should not stick to a particular grouping. A lottery and a categorization can be used for grouping. Arrangement of game tools and conditions (e.g., starting and finishing point) should be assured beforehand to make a game fair one.

6) Playing a group game

Most of all, the teacher needs to make the game enjoyable and fair. A teacher or a child can take a role of referee. The teacher and children should check on if children are following the game instructions and rules they set.

When the game instructions or rules are not well followed, the teacher and children should have an opportunity to reconsider and change them if there are any problems found in the instructions and rules. In case of a relay game, it can sometimes be overheated, so the teacher

needs to call a break and give the necessary guidance to the children. the teacher needs to assure the children that fair participation will help to make the game fun.

7) Judgment of game results

Although a teacher (referee) judges a game, children can participate in judging the game and evaluating themselves as well. If children are losing or winning in a game, they tend to sensitively react to the results. So various standards are needed to be set up for the judgment. For example, the participating attitudes, the performing ability, the observance of game instructions and rules, and the cheering attitudes can be taken into account, which will help children to improve their fair sprits and hard working attitudes. Rewards or penalties for the game results should be a part of enjoyable activities.

8) Evaluation and cleaning up after game

Evaluation is conducted after a game is over or when problems occur in playing the group game. The evaluation was not necessary to be conducted at the end of game. Children are interested in conflicts and problems right after these occur, ongoing evaluation is more effective than later. During the evaluation, discussion is desired, and the teacher should deal with what was good and bad in playing a game and try to make the children apply what they learned to the following game.

D. CONCLUSION

The activities of group games are the favorite activities of Korean children. Multiple benefits could gain from them if they are applied

through the appropriate ways. Without the teacher's appropriate guidance and management of the group game could do harm to the children's emotional and social development. The results of researches (Garaigordobil & Echebarria, 1995; Glakas, 1991) and the author's study (Choi, 1996) have evidenced these issues clearly. To have the opportunities to practice cooperation, self-regulation, decision-making, and reflective thinking can foster children's autonomy, problem solving ability, and pro-social behaviors. Therefore it is necessary for the teacher to have training in how to effectively apply group games in the classroom.

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presentation of the instructions and rules of a group game
grouping and arrangement of a game tools
playing a exercise game
deciding instructions, and rules of a game
PLAYING A GROUP GAME
checking on the observance the game instructions & rules
judgment of a game results
evaluation and cleaning up

Figure 1. Appropriate procedures of group game